

Tuesday, June 05, 2007

Senate Immigration Bill: The White House and the Senate recently announced a deal on “comprehensive illegal immigration reform” legislation. Contrary to claims by the bill’s authors, it is nothing short of amnesty for 12 million illegal immigrants living in the United States. The bill does not go far enough in strengthening our borders or enhancing our national security. In fact, it threatens to cause irreparable harm to our infrastructure and our homeland security for generations to come. As I have said, no bill is better than a bad one that may lead to even more illegal immigration. For that and many other reasons, I oppose this proposal.

Any immigration reform bill that I would consider supporting must address my concerns in the following areas:

No Amnesty. Illegal immigrants must forfeit citizenship forever. Under the current proposal, virtually all illegal immigrants who haven’t been convicted of three or more misdemeanors or a felony would be granted legal status and a work permit on the day they file for a “Z” visa. Moreover, the legislation does not require illegal immigrants to pay back taxes for the time they worked illegally in the United States. The bill essentially rewards illegal immigrants with a pathway to citizenship after breaking the law. Any immigrant who crosses our border illegally ought to forfeit citizenship to the United States forever.

Improve Enforcement Mechanisms in the bill. The bill falls woefully short of improving our efforts to enforce current immigration laws. To begin, it does not complete the border fence. It calls for an additional 10,000 local enforcement agents, when I believe 50,000 aren’t even enough. And it does nothing to give state and local police the resources to apprehend and detain illegal immigrants, something we have been doing effectively in the County of Orange and the City of Costa Mesa. Additionally, the bill doesn’t include language to penalize states and municipalities that don’t cooperate with federal immigration enforcement. Penalizing these so-called “sanctuary cities” is critical to any immigration reform bill.

End birthright citizenship. We must reverse our nation’s birthright citizenship policy. Children of illegal immigrants should no longer be granted automatic citizenship simply because they were born in the U.S.

End chain migration. The bill does not work fast enough to end chain migration. In fact, for most of the next two decades, the bill will increase extended-family chain migration by as many as four times the current levels.

New visa programs must be enforceable and expanded to high skilled workers. While the Senate proposal calls for up to one million visas for low-skilled workers, it does not do enough to attract higher skilled workers who will contribute to our nation's economy, boost our high-tech sector, and strengthen our global competitiveness. In addition, the new "Y" visa program is so convoluted and impractical that it would be impossible to enforce, ultimately leading to more illegal immigration.

This is just the tip of my concerns with this legislation. My concerns dramatically overshadow the good parts of the bill, like enhanced employer verification and provisions requiring English-only. I will not stand idly by and endorse a weak compromise that will reward illegal immigration, jeopardize our national security, and damage our infrastructure for our children and grandchildren. The consequences are far too great. I hope you will join me in calling on Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer to oppose this bill, and to ensure that it does not become law.

Until next week, I remain respectfully,

Congressman John Campbell